

A Confederate Soldier's Account  
of the

Last Days of the War in Ga. and the Carolinas  
by  
C.S. Powell

In November or December 1864, the 10th.,

Battalion to which I belonged, was sent from Fort Campbell below Wilmington, North Carolina to Georgia, to meet General Sherman's Army. We first stopped at Augusta, but were soon removed to Savannah via Charleston, South Carolina. At Pocotaligo, we were sent to meet a raiding party of Yankees from the nearby coast, and at Honey Hill, a sharp skirmish sent them pell mell back to their boats. We got a few of the negroes. Our loss, a few wounded. The gunboats after this, just shelled the trains by guess. One old Junior Reserve, remarked, that if they would elevate their guns a little lower they would knock the trains off the track and kill all the folks. Arriving at Savannah, we were sent up the Railroad between the Savannah and Ogeechee Rivers to the 45th. mile post. We here deployed a skirmish line a mile long and camped in a grove on a big plantation, for the night, throwing a few rails on a fence across the dirt road leading to the Ogeechee bridge. The plantation was deserted save by a goodly number of sweet potatoe hills which fared but middling. About nine o'clock next morning our skirmishers were driven



in, and a long double blue line of Yankees appeared advancing. We gave them a few volleys, but they soon made it dangerous. So we fell back to the pines and on to the railroad, where box cars were waiting for us. There was a mighty rattling of bullets among those pines, which made us hurry up, and on reaching the train we were nearly "bellowed" and had to boost each other. Several of our men were captured, Sergeant Major Dan Young, among them. We were carried to Savannah and placed on a canal about three miles west of the City, where fortifications were erected. The trees in front were felled and the limbs trimmed to arms length and left sharp facing the expected enemy. This was called an abattis. In three days they appeared, drove in our skirmishers, established a picket line and quietly sat down in our front. We had no fighting but, constant picket firing. We occasionally put up a dummy on the breastworks, which always drew their fire, and those western Yankees were good marksmen. Lieutenant Joseph Ellington returned from home and his wedding and cheered us with the Johnston County news. Heavy cannonading could be heard far to the





South, which proved to be the attack on the fort at the mouth of the Ogeechee River. One night about a week after we quietly evacuated our earth works, marched through Savannah and across the Savannah River, on a very shaky pontoon bridge across extensive rice farms, into the pine woods of South Carolina. We lost some more of our soldiers in Savannah among them Lieutenant S. A. Young, that is we did not see them any more. Our retreat through South Carolina was slow and difficult. Many rivers and swamps coupled with the cold rainy season and poorly clothed men, was distressing and none but the strongest could withstand it. In crossing Salkehatchee River, we were so closely pursued that the bridge was neglected to be burned, after kindling and barrels of rosin had been placed, Sherman's Cavalry were at our heels and firing on us. My Commander called for two volunteers to return and burn the bridge, at the same time a battery of Artillery was shelling the woods across the river. A half dozen volunteers stepped to the front, General McLaws, mounted on a beautiful crow black stallion standing like a statue, called the two



nearest him, gave them instructions and some matches, shook hands with them, and bade them go. While the battery was shelling the woods these two men walked as firmly and uprightly as any young lady ever did, fired the bridge, returned and were not even fired on. The General complimented them, and gave them a thirty days furlough, while sitting in his saddle. These men were privates Charlie Harris from Randolph, and J. B. Underwood, from Union County, North Carolina. They returned at the expiration of their furloughs, and were both wounded at Bentonsville. While on the Salkehatchee Swamp. A company of Georgians mistook a company of the 50th., N. C. Regiment, for the enemy and Lieutenant Corbett of the 50th., was killed. Several on both sides were wounded. Colonel Wash Hardy our Brigade Commander, detailed me to serve on his staff in this affair, and being his first acquaintance with me and I suppose I appeared rather boyish looking he asked me if I was afraid of the Yankees? I answered " Yes Sir," He then asked me if I would go with him I answered " Anything ". Lieutenants W. H. Bordin, and Jess Edmondson, of the 50th., were also on his staff. We set





out for the swamp where the unfortunate mistake was going on. Before reaching the firing line, Borden, and Edmundson, were sent off on some errand. Hardy and I galloped to the front, we discovered the mistake and boldly rode right on until near enough to them to yell to them what they were doing. Of course, I followed blindly but the trip made fast friends of the Colonel and myself. After that to ask of him a favor was to get it. No Southern picture is complete without a negro. My father sent a man with me to wait on and forage for me. One cold drizzly night while camped in some thick woods, camp fires burning dimly, while all were sleeping and still, this negro had set a large camp kettle filled with water and a little beef to cook, on top of a burning log heap, and lay down negro like with his head wrapped in his blanket near the log fire. The heap burning, settled, and the kettle tipped over, the boiling stuff running under the coon's head saturating the blanket and of course skinning his face. When old Jake blows his trumpet, no one mortal can do more or louder weeping wailing and gnashing of teeth. He alarmed the whole Army.

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The long roll was sounded regiments formed, artillery limbered up, and everything gotten in battle trim, before it was discovered to be a scalded nigger. While side-stepping, I will tell an ugle one on myself. One frosty morning while all were at breakfast, the Commissary Sergeant came around issuing a drink of brandy to all who would take it, ( and they were in the majority, ) I took the tin cup and poured the stuff right in with my morning hash. What else happened I don't know. About twelve o'clock, I had an awful pain in my left side. I found myself lying in a baggage wagon, with a spider leg nearly punched through between my ribs. I walked one sided and would not look at a tin cup for sometime. This monstrous march continued through South Carolina, except a railroad ride from Florence to Cheraw. We passed many fine plantations at which many evidences of Southern patriotism were shown by the ladies, such as strewing peanuts and sweet potatoes along the roadside for the soldiers. They evidently knew what the Yankees would do when they came, for columns of smoke by day, and lurid firelights at night, far in the rear indicated their destructive

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line of march; You have all heard what Sherman said of war. We stopped at all the principal rivers after burning the bridges, and prepared for battle. The Yankees just spread their columns far beyond our reach and crossed the rivers on their pontoon boats. We had to move or be surrounded. This was kept up through North Carolina, as far as Averysboro, where a considerable battle was fought. I was not in that battle for when within a few miles of Fayetteville, a three days leave of absense was granted me to go to my home which was sixty miles a head, to carry the news of destruction and advise "hiding things"out". I had a good horse and traveled the entire distance the first night. No use telling the good time I had in my old neighborhood. A party every night, the girls sweet and pretty. When the three day were out, I met the Army near the western edge of Johnston County. The boys gaying me saying I smelled like roses and "Sweet Betsies". Of course I remembered Colonel Hardy and brought him a canteen full of "hot stuff". We were soon on the battlefield of Bentonville, and Sunday evening formed line of battle on the extreme left, joining



McLaws Brigade of Georgians on our right. Our Battalion here performed one of the most difficult maneuvers in the tactics, that of "on the right by file into line", and this under fire and in the face of the enemy. This was done too at "double quick". We charged the enemy at once, through a sparse growth of old field pines on through some thick huckleberry bushes and ponds of water and found the enemy just on the opposite side. It being now dark they fired a volley at us and retreated precipitately.. We gave them a farewell volley but pursued no further. Such a rattling of canteens, other accoutrements, and cursing rallying orders of officers has never been heard since "Bro Rabbit", scared "Bro Bear" so badly. We lost thirty-seven men, killed and wounded in this charge. Only three officers escaped, I being one, I carried a spade in this fight and part of the time was holding it flatwise in front of me. During the night we were shifted to the extreme left of our new battle line, a mile or more from the last scene. We were facing the Goldsboro road, and on the slope of Sam Howell branch. An old pine tree in the Hall of the Museum, perforated with





the holes of many cannon and minnie balls, attests the sort of position we occupied. Their aim being bad, too high--- saved us from worse destruction. Though they only did skirmish firing with small arms and a twelve pound battery of artillery. The second night we quietly evacuated this line, fell back through Bentonsville and Smithfield, to Mitchenor's depot, then on the "North Carolina Railroad". Remaining here about ten days the Army was reorganized, decimated companies consolidated and Brigades re-arranged. Sherman's Army, instead of pursuing us from Bentonsville, went on to Goldsboro, where they were joined by troops from Wilmington and Newbern. From Mitchenor's depot we went on to Greensboro, by Raleigh, Chapel Hill, Hillsboro and Company Shops, ( now Burlington ) General Lee having surrendered the Virginia Army, an armistice was called by General Joe. Johnston and the terms of the surrender of his Army were completed. These were sad and uncertain days, Jesse Ellington, Joseph Ellington, John Kennedy, Lee Parker, Bill Renfroe, Nat Tomlinson, and myself returned home in a bunch. All but Nat Tomlinson and myself, have



paid the debt charged against us all, and we too must ere long meet the grim monster. All our associations were most pleasant during and after the war. While our war duties were arduous and dangerous yet, we managed to get some pleasure out of it. Trusting that this poor sketch may prove of some interest to you and the Johnston Pettigrew Chapter,

I am,

very respectfully,

C. S. Powell.

May 22, 1916.

*Mary Beverly Henderson*

